

One cannot intend or predetermine beauty to be the condition of a work of art before the work exists; rather, beauty becomes a condition after the fact of the work—an aura that is received. Because beauty is not an absolute, but a syntactical sign, it exists as an *a posteriori* condition of aesthetic receivership, not as an *a priori* mode of determination. Beauty cannot be predestined. This is why works made with the *intent* of becoming commercial media cannot exist in the same context as art.

Beauty is fundamentally a sensory experience even if that experience is instigated through a conceptual form. It is possible to feel a coherent concept on a profound and intimate level whether or not the work exists in the form of an object. Though more difficult to obtain, due to its heightened degree of abstraction and its dependency on a thorough knowledge of art history, philosophy, and the processes of studio art, conceptual art cannot be excluded from the effects of beauty. There can be beauty in conceptual art just as there is beauty in romanticism or neoclassicism. While the criteria may be different, according to specific methods or materials, the knowledge of the structure in art is consistent.

Beauty is an aesthetic issue, but not only that. Since the publication of Croce's *Aesthetic* at the beginning of the twentieth century (English translation, 1909), aesthetics has moved beyond "the science of beauty" as its sole concern. With Duchamp's fanciful, nearly insouciant *objets trouvés*, known as readymades (1913–21), not only art, but aesthetics was revolutionized. Beauty became a condition of syntax; that is, how the form is understood and acculturated within a given time and space.

In the sixties came the struggle between the old and the new, between aesthetic formalism (modernism) and conceptual art. The synthesis is still in the process: How to expand a definition of aesthetics beyond "the science of beauty"? How to include the social and natural sciences, psychoanalysis, and gender and ethnic diversity as flexible parameters in the reception of a work of art? The new aesthetic functions like a matrix, where ideas and images from various disciplines enter into art, yet art must somehow attend to its own method within the scope of this abundant information. What separates us from Croce's world a century ago is our heightened degree of self-consciousness. Referring again to the problem of the mind-body split, it is this obsession with the self that ironically precludes beauty as a self-begetting act.

Beauty is not glamour. Most of what the media has to offer us is glamour.

Most of what the fashion world has to offer us is glamour. Most of what Hollywood has to offer us is glamour. Most of what the art world has to offer is glamour. Glamour, like the art world itself, is a highly fickle and commercially driven enterprise that contributes to what the late critic Lewis Mumford used to call "the humdrum." It appears and it disappears. What is "in" at one moment is suddenly "out" the next. It is about the persistence of longing. No one ever catches up to glamour. There is too much money at stake, too many investments. Glamour is about the external sign—the commercial logo—and has little to do with the inner-directed concerns of artists other than as subject matter for some expropriation of popular culture. Such examples can be found in works ranging from Man Ray to Ray Johnson, from Meret Oppenheim to Louise Bourgeois.

But the artist has to exist—to live—within a world that is mediated through glamour. The allure is constantly in the air. It is both omnipresent and omniscient. It carries the seduction of instant fame and success. It is the basis of the spectacle and the spectacle is about the cycle of repetition, the lack that confounds passivity, the utter abeyance of the affectation of desire. Beauty functions on another level. It cannot be predetermined by strategies of investment or by the sublimation of advertising. Beauty adheres to a structure or meaning that somehow coalesces with the material reality of existence. Because beauty is recognized through form and intuition, it requires preparation, time, and focus. The seventeenth-century mathematician Blaise Pascal spoke of intuition as a quality that emerges when logic has exhausted its limits, provided that the mind is alert to that moment. In this way, beauty is an intuition with an affinity to the hypothesis of Pascal. It is an intuitive structure, a recognition of form, that, as Santayana asserts, is finally unprovable given its relationship to the senses.

Beauty is an act of grace and is given neither to force or imposition. It is not an intent. It promises nothing.